

Expectations by LeftHandOfSnarkness

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, Jonathan learns self esteem, Lonnie is a jerk

Language: English

Characters: Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lonnie Byers, Nancy Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-11-21

Updated: 2016-11-21

Packaged: 2022-04-02 00:15:15

Rating: Not Rated

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,234

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Jonathan was never the son his father had wanted, but it took Will vanishing for him to realize he didn't need to be.

Expectations

Author's Note:

This was going to be part of the "One Week" story, but it sort of took on a life of it's own, and by the time it was done it really didn't fit with the "Nancy" and "Steve" stories, but I still like it, so here it is!

Logically, Jonathan knew that there were very few things his father was right about. Lonnie was a deadbeat, someone who could never get his life together and barely even tried, and Jonathan had spent most of his childhood trying to minimize the amount of damage he inflicted on the family. His mom cried when she found out her husband had run off to Indianapolis, but Jonathan just wished he had gone farther. Indianapolis was close enough for Lonnie to make plans that he never followed through on, for cheap phone calls that ended in shouting matches, for him dropping by to try to weasel money out of Joyce. Jonathan had learned a long time ago that his father didn't bring anything to the family but heartbreak. But even though he knew all of that, Lonnie's words had wormed their way into his mind over the years, become a small voice that belittled him long after the man himself wasn't around to do it. That reminded him that his father thought he was a screw-up, and that most of the town probably agreed with him. And although him mom always did her best to tell him that she loved him, that she was proud of him, it took that horrible week for him to realize how full of shit Lonnie was.

"Photography is a girlie hobby," he had said, disappointed that he had somehow ended up with a son who preferred taking pictures to hunting or playing t-ball. And so Jonathan had stopped showing off the pictures he took with him mom's Polaroid- even the ones he thought might really be good- because it wasn't worth the sting of having his dad brush him off. And when his mother had saved up her money to buy him his own camera and film he had hidden his excitement, acted like it was no big deal when all he wanted to do was run around the house and take pictures of everything in sight. He didn't mention the fact that he had joined the photography club at school, that his teacher said he had *talent*. His projects went into a

shoebox under his bed even as he made sure that all of Will's artwork got hung on the fridge. Even after Lonnie had left he mostly kept it to himself. It was a weird hobby, one more way to keep himself separated from other people, always looking at the world through the lens instead of being a part of the action. One more thing that made him a freak.

But his photography was the reason why they had pictures of Will to put on the "missing" posters. Good, current pictures that would help people identify him. His pictures were the reason they had evidence—real, hard evidence that the Demogorgon was real. Proof that his mom wasn't crazy, that Barb hadn't just "run away," that Will hadn't drowned in a quarry like the Staties had said.

"Just kill the fucking thing, it's only a rabbit, for Christ's sakes," Lonnie had said in exasperation. And Jonathan had, and then he cried the whole way home, and Lonnie had told him not to be a wuss. 'Wuss' was one of his favorite insults to lob at his son, the perfect summation of a kid who would rather spend hours listening to music or helping his mom than doing any of the "manly" things his dad wanted to do. And Jonathan knew it was true. He had no interest in killing animals, or joining a team, or trying to get some hunk of junk car working. He hated crowds and had trouble looking people in the eye. He wasn't loud or obnoxious like his father, wasn't concerned with making sure everyone knew when he entered a room.

But he had beaten up Steve Harrington. The popular, good-looking jock had looked like ground meat by the time the cops pulled Jonathan off of him. Those bruises had taken a week to fade and the cuts had lingered even longer, and thanks to Carol and Tommy's fat mouths everyone at school had known that he was the one to cause them. And he had set up a trap for the Demogorgon, turned the house into a mine field of booby traps. He had been ready to die there, if that was what it took for his mom to get Will back. And even though he still didn't like being around most people, and he still couldn't shoot for shit, he knew he wasn't a wuss.

"If you keep babying that boy he's gonna turn out to be some kind of fag, Joyce" his father's too-loud voice carried the comment down the hall, and Jonathan turned up his music and let the headphones drown out the sound of his parents arguing. Lonnie's interest in his

son had been almost non-existent for years now, but now that he was in High School he had pulled himself away from the TV and beer long enough to why Jonathan never showed any interest in girls. "Don't be a queer, just talk to her," Lonnie had said, nudging him toward the cute girl who worked at the cash register. But he had just clenched his jaw and stared at his feet until Lonnie paid for the smokes and 6-pack and shoved him toward the door. It had affirmed, once and for all, in his father's mind that the two of them really did have nothing in common. And if his unathletic, wussy son wasn't going to bring home a girl, well then he wasn't ever going to turn into any kind of man. Lonnie had left shortly after that, and even if there had been someone he wanted to date he wouldn't have had time, he had a job to work and Will to take care of and no extra money to waste on going out.

But Jonathan did like girls. One girl, at least. Nancy, sweet, pretty Nancy who could shoot a gun and plan an ambush; who had a scar on her hand that matched the one on his. When he had pulled her out of the Upside Down he held on to her as tightly as he could, and he swore that nothing in the world had ever felt more real. He had slept the night in her bed, breathing in the smell of her strawberry shampoo, the revolver in between them in case the Demogorgon came back. He had cradled her bleeding hand in his, wrapping it up in gauze as best he could. They had stood, shoulder to shoulder in the face of near certain death and he had thought that there were worse ways to die than fighting beside Nancy Wheeler. He was the one who wrapped his arms around her when the nightmares got too bad, kept her safe until her steady breathing pulled him into sleep after her, woke up with her still pressed against his chest.

He wasn't ever going to be the kind of man his father was, and even though he had always known that- had never *wanted* to be like him- it had taken the worst week of his life for him to realize that he was better than him. That he was dependable, that people trusted him, liked him, *loved* him. That he was twice the man that Lonnie could ever hope to be.